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Ex-CIA Analyst Held as Spy; China Allegedly Got Secrets

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A retired Central Intelligence Agency analyst was arrested by the FBI last night on espionage charges for allegedly passing classified national security documents to China over a period of many years, according to a top FBI official.

Larry Wu-Tai Chin, 61, who retired from the agency in 1981 after about 30 years' employment, was taken into custody in Alexandria and charged with espionage and conspiracy, according to Assistant FBI Director William Baker. "He's been spying for a long period of time," Baker said.

Another source familiar with the investigation said the FBI believes Chin, a native of mainland China, has engaged in espionage activities since shortly after he was recruited by the CIA in the Far East in the early 1950s.

Chin was being held in the Arlington County jail pending a bond hearing today before a U.S. magistrate in Alexandria, according to a jail official and the FBI.

Officials said last night that additional details about case will be revealed when a sealed complaint outlining the charges against Chin is made public at the hearing.

At the time of his retirement, Chin worked in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service at the CIA's headquarters in Langley, according to a source. The nature of the information Chin allegedly supplied to the Chinese could not be learned last night.

The arrest of Chin comes a day after Jonathan J. Pollard, a civilian counterintelligence analyst for the Naval Investigative Service, was arrested outside the Israeli Embassy on espionage charges for allegedly providing classified information to a foreign government that sources have identified as Israel. Pollard's wife Anne Henderson-Pollard was arrested last night at the D.C. Jail while visiting her husband and charged with unauthorized possession of classified documents.

The arrests of Chin and the Pollards are the latest in a series of spy cases that have rocked the intelligence community over the last six months and have sparked calls on Capitol Hill for the U.S. government to bolster its counterintelligence programs.

A woman who answered the phone at Chin's home at the Watergate at Landmark on Yoakum Parkway in Alexandria last night and who identified herself as his wife said she was unaware of his arrest. "Around dinner time he called me and said he wasn't coming home," the woman said.

George Lauder, the CIA's press spokesman, declined to comment last night and referred all inquiries to the FBI.

The arrests of three new suspects on espionage charges in the past two days add to an already lengthy list of what appears to be an unprecedented number of espionage-related charges, arrests and prosecutions brought to public attention in the United States this year.

Perhaps the most prominent of the cases involved John Anthony Walker Jr., a retired Navy chief warrant officer who was accused of masterminding a ring that funneled military secrets to the Soviets for as long as 20 years.

Walker and his son, Seaman Michael Lance Walker, pleaded guilty Oct. 28 in Baltimore to spying for the Soviets.

John Walker's brother, retired Navy Lt. Cmdr. Arthur James Walker, 51, was convicted Aug. 9 in a federal court in Virginia of seven counts of espionage.

As part of the plea agreement John Walker reached with federal prosecutors, he agreed to testify at the Jan. 13 trial of Jerry Alfred Whitworth, his longtime friend and a former Navy communications specialist who is the last defendant to face trial in the Walker case.

On Nov. 6, a mistrial was declared in Los Angeles in the case of former FBI agent Richard W. Miller, when a jury failed to reach a verdict on charges connected with an alleged scheme to pass classified documents to the Soviet Union.

On Oct. 17 a federal court jury in Baltimore convicted former Navy intelligence analyst Samuel Loring Morison of espionage and theft for leaking to a British magazine three spy satellite photographs that were classified secret.

On Oct. 2, the FBI said it had issued an arrest warrant for Edward Lee Howard, 33, a former CIA officer charged with conspiracy to deliver defense information to a foreign government. He is still being sought.

Five days earlier, Sharon M. Scranage, who had worked for the CIA in Ghana as a clerk, pleaded guilty to one charge of revealing classified information. Espionage charges against her were dismissed.